



**Emily and Richardson Preyer Buckridge Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, 9 June 2016, 1:30pm-2:40pm**

Attendance

LAC Members	Affiliation/Interest	Present
Mr. Mark Cagle	NCWRC – Enforcement	No
Mr. David Turner	NCWRC –Biologist	No
Mr. William Ridgeway	NCWRC – Game lands	Yes
Mr. Howard Phillips	PLNWR	Yes
Sheriff Darryl Liverman	Tyrrell County Sheriff's Office	No
Mr. Mike Clements	Community Member	Yes
Mr. David Clegg	Tyrrell County Government	No
Mr. Andy Hux	NCDFR	No
Mrs. Nina Griswell	Tyrrell County Government	No
<u>Others Present</u>		
Woody Webster	DCM, Buckridge Site Manager	
Jimmy Johnson	Coastal Habitats Coordinator, APNEP	
Luke Fleshman	Conservation Tech - NCWRC	

Reserve Program Update – Woody Webster



Reserve-wide Administrative Update – Spring 2016

- *Staffing News*

Scott Crocker, Northern Sites Manager for the Coastal Reserve, left the Division in March to take a position with NC State Parks as the State Trail Program Manager. Scott was with our program for 3 years and made significant progress in advancing the protection and management of the Currituck Banks, Kitty Hawk Woods, and Buxton Woods Coastal Reserves. We wish Scott well in his new endeavors. The vacant position will be posted this week.

- *Legislative Update*

The N.C. Coastal Reserve and National Estuarine Research Reserve was impacted by two sections in the 2015 Appropriations Act (Session Law 2015-241) passed last year: 1. Cape Fear Estuarine Resource Restoration section [14.6.(h)] which considers the removal of a portion of the New Inlet Dam, or “the rocks,” at the Zeke’s Island Reserve, which is part of the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve; and 2. Study further efficiencies in organization of Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) and Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) section [14.31.(a-b)] which considers transferring additional agencies, divisions, and programs to DNCR for potential efficiency, cost savings, and alignment of core mission and values. The Coastal Reserve is one of the programs listed for potentially transferring.

Reports on both sections were submitted to the General Assembly in April 2016 and are located at the web links below. The Cape Fear Estuarine Resource Restoration report outlines the steps the DEQ took to implement the legislation. It is not a study of the proposal to consider removal of the Southern Component of the New Inlet Dam, nor does it provide any recommendations regarding the proposal. The efficiencies study report recommends not transferring the Coastal Reserve program from DEQ to DNCR at this time.

The Department is awaiting further direction from the General Assembly on both sections of these sections of the 2015 Appropriations Act.

Cape Fear Estuarine Resource Restoration: <https://deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/coastal-management/coastal-management-hot-topics/reports>

Organizational Efficiencies: http://www.ncleg.net/documentsites/committees/BCCI-6658/April%2012/Reports/7_DNCR%20Further%20Efficiencies%20with%20DEQ%20and%20WRC.pdf

- *NCNERR Management Plan Update*

Staff are continuing to write the full draft management plan update for the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve. Writing has taken longer than anticipated due to current workloads and receiving additional clarity on NOAA management plan guidance requirements and the various reviews needed. The immediate next step is for NOAA to review the initial draft



plan. The Reserve will then seek input from the LACs, N.C. Coastal Resources Commission, and the N.C. Department of Environmental Quality. NOAA will then review the final draft management plan. A 30-day public comment period and three public meetings will be held on the final draft management plan prior to the plan's final publication. Staff anticipate the plan coming to the LACs for their review later this year.

- *LAC Community Member Appointments*

Community members serving on the local advisory committees whose terms expired in December 2014 per the Local Advisory Committee Operating Procedures document will remain on the committees through December 2017 to ensure continuity on the committees throughout the NCNERR Management Plan update process. An application and appointment process will be undertaken in 2017 for community member seats.

- *Budget*

The NCNERR will receive \$619,322 from NOAA for operation of the program during next fiscal year, up \$24,872 from last year. Funds will be used to incorporate funding for temporary staffing positions into the annual budget rather than relying on a variety of different funding sources that vary from year to year.

Periodic Rules Review

The Coastal Reserve's rules, 07O, are scheduled to be reviewed by the Rules Review Commission in June 2017 as part of Periodic Review and Expiration of Existing Rules process (G.S. 150B-21.3A). To meet this deadline, staff classified each rule citation in 07O as necessary with substantive public interest, necessary without substantive public interest, or unnecessary per G.S. 150B-21.3A (c)(1), and sought input from the local advisory committee on the draft classifications. Committee input received by staff is summarized in the table below. Next steps include summarizing input received from the 10 local advisory committees, seeking input on the draft classification from the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission and the Department of Environmental Quality prior to the draft classification being published for a 60 day public comment period.



Site Updates – Woody Webster

Hunting

Bear harvest increased to 18, from 14 the previous year. Of those, 4 were female. Size and numbers continue to indicate a sustainable harvest, especially given the proximity of large bear sanctuaries. Last year's deer harvest dropped, from 28 to 24. Of those harvested, 9 were female, and 2 were button bucks.

NCWRC has made much progress on their plan to rehabilitate the roads at Buckridge. Last year's rock order has been delivered and applied to Eastern Road, reaching nearly to the first spur road. Mr. Williams indicated they plan to stockpile this year's rock order at the entrance of Eastern Road again, as it gives his staff more time to apply the rock thoughtfully. The rest of Eastern Road has been graded and shaped thoroughly this spring, and most of the road is now well-crowned. Those who have seen the road recently agreed that it looks better than it has in recent memory. Additionally, NCWRC continues to pursue the purchase of an operations depot in the town of Columbia, and are at the second stage of that endeavor.

Given the effort NCWRC has put into roadwork this year, members questioned whether monitoring road use would be prudent, possibly with trail cameras. Staff explained Reserve policy prohibits intentional use of cameras by staff to monitor users, outside of an enforcement issue. Staff suggested that such research could be undertaken by another agency with a research permit. LAC members discussed the possibility of cost tracking, and gaining an insight into the number of repeat trips by the same users.

This led to a discussion on the density of bear hunters using Buckridge. There was general concern about safety, and whether a reduction of hunters using the property simultaneously is warranted. No safety violations have been verified by staff in the years Buckridge has been open to public bear hunts. NCWRC described how bear hunter numbers are controlled on certain game lands, but gave no specific recommendation of action for Buckridge.

Grant Award

The USFWS awarded the Reserve a National Coastal Wetlands grant for acquisition of the Woodley Tract. Staff are currently wrapping up paperwork for funds transfer, while our partners at the Nature Conservancy perform a survey ahead of purchase. When completed, this purchase will add 2,040 acres to Buckridge. Mr. Ridgeway asked what plans the Reserve had for hunting on this new parcel. Mr. Philips stated hunters may trespass into the adjacent Refuge property unintentionally, but agreed with many on the LAC that hunting the boundary along the two properties would be very difficult, possibly mitigating the prospect. Mr. Ridgeway was uncertain what his agency's interest might be in the larger, inaccessible portion of the parcel east of NC 94, but felt that portion west of 94, adjacent to land they manage, would be looked on favorably for hunting.

Surplus Property

Staff successfully placed the mobile home at Buckridge on state surplus and it has been purchased. However, the winner of the bidding has requested several extensions to the removal timeframe, the latest until the end of June. LAC members asked what plans the Reserve has for the lot once the mobile home is removed. Staff indicated existing storage will continue to be utilized, and in the long term, additional shop/storage space may be sought, given the resources already on that lot.

Upcoming

The Buckridge Site Manager will continue to help out at the Northern Sites while a replacement manager is sought for that office. Applications are still being received as of today, and it is hoped a replacement can be found prior to the end of summer.

The Nature Conservancy and the US Air Force approached the Reserve seeking additional properties eligible for REPI funding. Staff mentioned local landowners who may be interested in the program, as well as a single property at Grapevine Landing surrounded by the Reserve. This parcel, known as the Primland Tract, is about 260 acres of riverfront retained by the former owners of Buckridge. County leadership has demonstrated an interest in developing a boat ramp at this location, where an informal ramp exists. After receiving departmental approval, a Clean Water Management Trust Fund grant application was submitted for the parcel. Trust Fund staff visited the parcel for review last month. A funding decision should be made sometime in September.

Member Roundtable

Much of the roundtable was spent discussing the rules review, the summary of which is listed in the table below. After the rules review discussion, no further comments were made.

Public Comments

No members of the public chose to make a comment at this time.

Review of Action Items

Action items for next year include finalizing acquisition of the Woodley Tract, as well as taking necessary steps for potential acquisition of the Primland Tract. Investigating directional signage from main roads to Buckridge will continue. Members chose to maintain an annual meeting frequency, with its scheduling included as an action item, potentially for next spring.

Rule Section	Rule Citation	Rule Name	Agency Draft Determination [150B-21.3A(c)(1)a]	LAC Input
SECTION .0100 - GENERAL PROVISIONS	15A NCAC 07O .0101	STATEMENT OF PURPOSE	Necessary with substantive public interest	Agree
	15A NCAC 07O .0102	DEFINITIONS AS USED IN THIS SUBCHAPTER	Necessary without substantive public interest	Agree
	15A NCAC 07O .0103	RESPONSIBILITIES: DUTIES OF THE COASTAL RESERVE PROGRAM	Necessary with substantive public interest	Agree. Given the lack of in-house enforcement, it was felt that prohibiting all uses not specifically authorized would be a more efficient management strategy. One member wondered aloud how the Reserves function without such a methodology, given the evolving nature of potentially incompatible uses (i.e. drones harassing wildlife). It was felt that untested uses ought to have a permitting system in place which must be weighted toward resource protection. Such a system would reduce staff time needed to address new, potentially incompatible uses and also reduce the necessity of future rule revisions when truly conflicting uses arise.
	15A NCAC 07O .0104	STATE AND LOCAL COASTAL RESERVE ADVISORY COMMITTEES	Necessary without substantive public interest	Agree

	15A NCAC 07O .0105	RESERVE COMPONENTS	Necessary without substantive public interest	Agree
SECTION .0200 - MANAGEMENT: USE AND PROTECTION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA COASTAL RESERVE	15A NCAC 07O .0201	MANAGEMENT PLAN	Necessary without substantive public interest	<p>Disagree. LAC members mirrored other comments that language addressing flexibility in management would be a good addition here.</p> <p>It was also suggested that this section be used to give management plans more teeth, perhaps by indicating that policies within the management plan are enforceable rules.</p>
	15A NCAC 07O .0202	RESERVE USE REQUIREMENTS	Necessary with substantive public interest	<p>Agree. Members felt that the existing rule should have more regulations than those few listed, if proper resource protection is a Reserve goal. Statements wondering how the Reserves operate with so few enforceable rules were repeated by additional LAC members.</p> <p>NCWRC wondered whether item 6 might benefit from the addition of "trapping" to the language.</p>